

Mindfulness at Sharpham

A. Our Vision

The Sharpham Trust is an education and conservation charity based on the Sharpham Estate in South Devon.

Our Vision is: “To create a more mindful, compassionate and environmentally sustainable world”.

We aim to achieve this by connecting people with nature and fostering mindfulness and well-being through our programme of retreats, mindfulness courses, outdoor learning and the arts. The Sharpham Trust offers access to an inspiring, nourishing environment in order that people have the opportunity to participate and explore what gives meaning to their lives through interaction with the natural world.

The principles guiding the Trust’s activities are:

- an understanding of the interconnectedness of all life
- a deep respect for the natural world
- a belief in learning through experience
- creative engagement and enquiry
- an acknowledgement of the value of stillness and awareness

The Trust aspires to be a living demonstration of these principles in all its activities.

Sharpham has a long-standing involvement with mindfulness meditation and creative enquiry stretching back over 30 years and begun by Maurice and Ruth Ash who founded the Trust.

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. It is a systemic approach to developing new kinds of control and wisdom in our lives, based on our inner capacities for relaxation, paying attention, awareness and insight. It is a way of looking deeply into oneself in the spirit of self-enquiry and self-understanding. It is not dependent on any belief system or ideology, so that its benefits are therefore accessible for anyone to test for himself or herself. Yet it is no accident that mindfulness comes out of Buddhism, which has as its overriding concerns the relief of suffering and the dispelling of illusions”



Jon Kabat-Zinn – Full Catastrophe Living

“Mindfulness provides a simple but powerful route for getting ourselves unstuck, back in touch with our own wisdom and vitality. It is a way to take charge of the direction and quality of our own lives, including our relationships within the family, our relationship to work and to the larger world and planet, and most fundamentally, our relationship with our self as a person”

Jon Kabat-Zinn – Wherever you go, There you are

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B. The approach to mindfulness at Sharpham

1. We strive to offer a range of accessible doorways or entry points to mindfulness for people at all stages of their life or mindfulness practice.
2. The way we manage the Trust and its activities should reflect a mindfulness approach in terms of doing so non-reactively, non-judgementally, openheartedly and compassionately.
3. We want our approach to mindfulness and its teaching to be rooted in our principles and our mission of connecting people to nature. As Maurice Ash said, “We and our environment are inseparable.”
4. We believe that mindfulness has an important role to play in addressing the ecological and social challenges of our times and coming to stay at Sharpham offers a unique opportunity to connect and build appreciation and gratitude for the natural world whilst developing mindfulness practice.
5. We aim to cultivate a community of practice that encompasses our teachers, practitioners and the wider community coming together around shared values and practice.
6. Our teachers or retreat leaders should be suitably experienced and qualified for the activities they are delivering and should pursue on-going training, development and mentoring.

C. Mindfulness and the Natural World at Sharpham

“Behind all this there is a further thought: that, as a matter of survival on the land today, new forms of social life will have to be evolved; and that, simultaneously, those forms, and that survival, will require the evolution of a new mentality, a new set of values, in mankind. The Sharpham Trust was devised with all this in mind”

Maurice Ash, Trust founder



We want people who experience Sharpham to connect spiritually with the natural world. As a result we hope that they will:

- Become aware of how we are all part of nature not artificially separate from it
- Be able to pay attention to and appreciate the natural world surrounding us
- Explore nature through our senses and our natural creativity
- Tread more lightly on our finite planet, developing a respect and reverence for all living things

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We try to exemplify our principles in practical ways including:

- Managing our farm land organically without the use of harmful chemicals
- Generating renewable energy through solar panels on our barns and heating our buildings with large biomass boilers run on wood chip
- Growing our own food and supporting local food suppliers
- Use biodegradable cleaning products
- Promoting wildlife and biodiversity across the estate
- Encouraging greener transport
- Creating the green burial site Sharpham Meadow

D. Our programme

We are a leading centre internationally for mindfulness and well-being offering a rich and varied programme of retreats and courses with different ‘doorways’ to learning about and experiencing mindful awareness. Our programme includes opportunities for those new to mindfulness, as well as those looking to re-connect with or deepen their practice in a welcoming, safe and non-judgmental setting.

We offer:

- **Secular mindfulness courses** – 8 week and introductory courses with teachers who have trained in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction / Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy
- **Contemporary Dharma retreats** - for those interested in exploring the original field and roots of mindfulness from a Buddhist perspective.
- **Themed Mindfulness retreats** - which are linked to our guiding vision of creative enquiry and of connecting people to the natural world

Our 550-acre Estate will soon be home to four exceptional retreat venues, all set in the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty:

- **Sharpham Barn Retreat** - 6-night meditation retreats throughout the year in a wonderful converted Devon Linhay and based on a contemporary approach to Western Buddhism. The Barn offers retreatants the chance to experience teacher-led inquiry and working meditation in our organic garden - developing a mindfulness practice for everyday life.
- **Sharpham House** - secular mindfulness retreats with the opportunity to stay in a beautiful Grade I-listed Georgian mansion house at the centre of Capability Brownian parkland, with superb gardens offering delightful views over the River Dart. Retreats at Sharpham House are fully catered for with house-keeping staff in attendance. Retreats include 3-night Mindfulness for Beginners as well as themed retreats such as yoga, walking and self-compassion.
- **Woodland Retreats** - a unique chance to stay in our woodland campsite in the grounds of Sharpham House with a focus on “coming to our senses” through connecting to the natural world.
- **The Coach House (opening Spring 2022)** - a Grade II-listed building with four wings that surround an enclosed private courtyard. There will be 18 bedrooms and 15 bathrooms. 12 of the bedrooms are en-suite and there are 6 twin rooms - the capacity is 24 with sharing.

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